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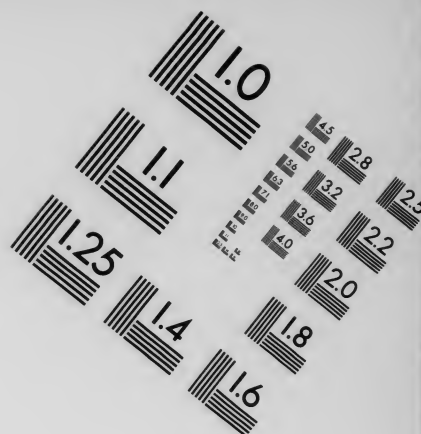
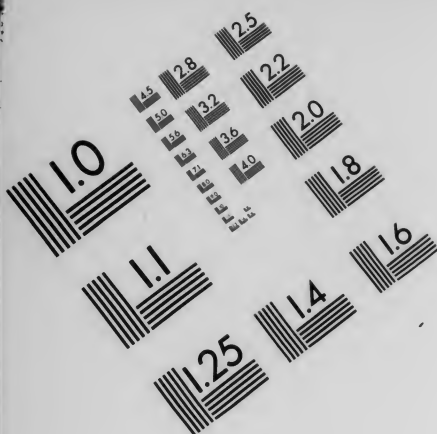


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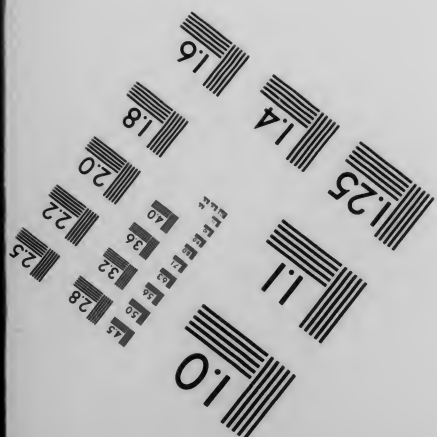
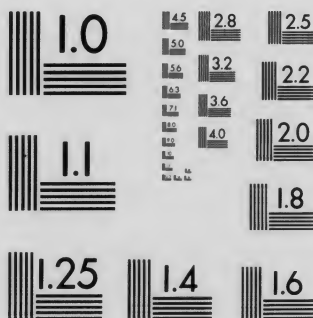
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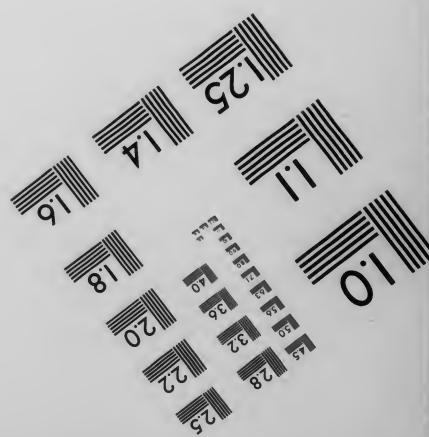
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Sappho and the Sapphic Metre in English

WITH BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

BY

EDWIN MARION COX, M.D.

Coll. P. & S. 1891.

*23 Bedford Square
London*



LONDON

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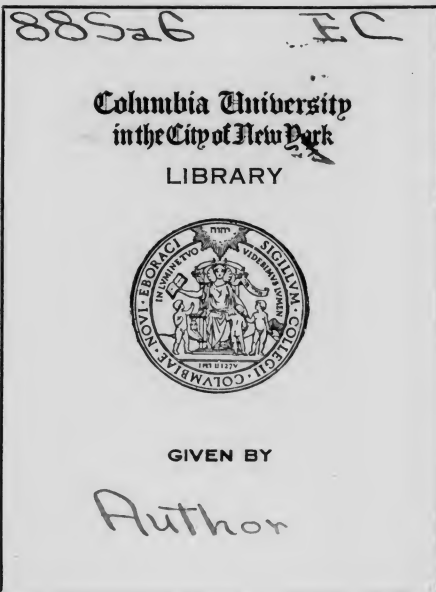
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Sappho and the Sapphic Metre in English

ALTHOUGH some of the fragmentary writings of Sappho were known in Europe for centuries in the original, the study of Greek in England was not sufficiently advanced to induce anyone capable of doing it to attempt, until comparatively late, the translation into our language of the very scanty remains of her poetical productions which have been transmitted to us in the form of inadequate and tantalizing quotations, scattered through the works of later writers. To Dionysius of Halicarnassus, our gratitude is due for the transmission to posterity of the marvellous Hymn to Aphrodite, for it is only in his writings that this has been handed down in its entirety. His comment is sufficiently appreciative to cause us astonishment and regret that he did not think it worth while to preserve something else for us, and by so doing to magnify our indebtedness to him. Time, neglect, and insensate ignorance have combined completely to annihilate the nine books of lyrics known to have been in existence at one period, except for the series of fragments of the works of the poetess, most recently edited and collated by Wharton, her most thorough editor. This series begins with the great hymn in its complete perfection, and ends with fragments consisting often of single words quoted by some prolix grammarian to illustrate a point of syntax or a dialectic

peculiarity. During the past few years the Egypt Exploration Fund has sent indefatigable workers to the Delta of the Nile, and among other treasure trove there has been a certain number of fairly satisfactory fragments from second and third century papyri of Sappho's works. These recovered fragments have been deciphered, translated, and from time to time published.

However, the history of her writings as far as translations into English is concerned, only begins in the seventeenth century, although before the middle of that century there was a considerable number of references of varying length and importance scattered through English books, chiefly on historical and poetical subjects. Although few of these early references to the poetess have anything to do with actual translation of the fragments, their character and occurrence have a certain interest and a bibliographical relationship with the later attempts at translation into English. Such references also serve as an indication of the mental attitude of writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries towards Sappho, and from them we acquire the impression, that there was a gradual growth in appreciation and comprehension as the eighteenth century loomed into view, though this appreciation and comprehension were often clouded by the inability of these writers, owing to their imperfect knowledge and the prepossessions of their intellectual environment, to shake themselves free from the effects of the scandals launched by the later Greek comic writers, who were undoubtedly writing down to their audiences in many of the comedies which they produced. It is to be hoped that some interest attaches to the tracing of references to Sappho in English books of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in addition to the interest of the translations of her writings, in the narrower bibliographical sense. Biographical references and translations are so intimately associated in her case that they may be satisfactorily discussed together. Though her poems in the original were known to a few Englishmen

in Elizabethan and Jacobean times, this knowledge appears to have been superficial with a large proportion of it infected with the Ovidian version of the alleged episode in connection with Phaon, for references to this and to the Leucadian rock legend, with a few doubtful biographical details from late classical sources comprise all that we have in English up to, as we shall see later, the appearance of John Hall's translation of Longinus in 1652. There was apparently no attempt to translate the magnificent Hymn to Aphrodite, although nearly every classical writer of anything like equal importance had some attention during this period. Much that was Greek we must, however, remember came to England in French or Latin versions frequently tinctured with the personal views of the translators into those languages. It is a fact worth noting that the Sapphic metre attracted certain poets and compilers soon after it was known in England, but the first attempts to use it in our language were not in the nature of translations, but of original compositions. For example, in Barnabe Barnes' "Parthenophil and Parthenophe," 1593, there are two attempts at lyrics in imitation of the Greek, one in Sapphics and one in Anacreontics. The first verse of the Sapphic poem goes as follows:

O, that I could make her, whom I love best,
Find in a face, with misery wrinkled,
Find in a heart, with sighs over ill-pined
Her cruel hatred,

and the other four verses are of the same somewhat jerky and undistinguished quality. In Davison's "Poetical Rhapsody," 1602, there is also an attempt at Sapphics in a set of verses supposed to be by the mysterious "A. W.," who contributed other poems to this rare anthology. A specimen verse is as follows:

Hatred eternal, furious revenging,
Merciless raging, bloody persecuting;
Slandrous speeches, odious revilings;
Causeless abhorring.

This is very vigorous, and also very rough, and a bad imitation of poetry noted particularly for its sweetness and melody.

In "Wits Theatre of the Little World," 1599, on leaf 72 of this curious collection of extracts from classical and mediaeval writers on all sorts of subjects occurs the statement that "poets fain that in Leucadia there is a very high steepe rocke which is a notable remedy to assuage love," and on leaf 152 it is said that "Lucilius was the first that wrote Satyres and Sappho the first poeme of love," the reference being to Pausanias. No other particulars of Sappho's life or works are given. In 1601, Thomas Campion and Philip Roseter published a book called "Lyrics, Elegies," etc., and in the "Address to the Reader" Sapphic verse is mentioned, and in the book itself an example is given. It is a sort of English hymn in Sapphic metre, but there is no reference to the actual poetry of Sappho. The imitation is rather clumsy and has a somewhat sanctimonious ring to it. Again, in 1614 there was published a tract of sixteen leaves entitled, "The Martyrdom of Saint George of Cappadocia," etc. It contains two dedications, the second of which is signed "Tristram White." There is at the end a page devoted to what the author calls "Sapphicks" which resemble the real poetry of Sappho only in having the same number of syllables to the line. There is nothing of the true Sappho in the production, and obviously no appreciation of the greatness of her poetic genius. Ben Jonson in "The Sad Shepherd," Act II, Scene VI, used the expression, "the dear good Angel of the spring, the nightingale," which is decidedly reminiscent of Sappho's Ἠρος ἄγγελος ἱμερόφωνος ἁήδων, with which it is likely that such a good classical scholar as Jonson was familiar. Although a little later in the century, the cultivated and learned Thomas Stanley translated the works of Anacreon and other Greek writers, Sappho either escaped his notice or he did not consider the fragments of sufficient importance to put into English,

for no reference to them or their author appears in his volume privately printed in sections in 1650 and 1651, and re-issued by a bookseller in 1652 as a book for public circulation.

In Burton's immortal "Anatomy of Melancholy," first published in 1621, again in 1624 and in 1628 for the first time with the engraved title-page, in Part 3, Section 2, there is a reference to "Leucata Petra," and it is stated that "here leaped down that Lesbian Sappho for Phaon on whom she miserably doted, hoping thus to ease herself and to be freed of her love pangs." This legend with its Ovidian handling seems to have been of perennial interest in the earlier days of classical studies in England, but as far as Burton is concerned Sappho as a writer of poetry might never have existed, and his remarks are only of incidental interest.

Apparently the first actual rendering into English of either of the two important Sapphic fragments occurs in an uncommon little book, a translation of Longinus on the Sublime, done by John Hall of Durham, the poet, in 1652. This volume, and another to be described later, seem to have escaped the notice of writers on Sappho, and they were certainly unknown to Joseph Addison, who definitely states in the "Spectator" that the translations done by Ambrose Philips in 1711 were the first in English. This book is a very small octavo, and the title, printed in red and black, reads as follows—"Περὶ Ὑψους or Dīnōysius Longinus of the Height of Eloquence rendered out of the Original by J. H. Esq. London Printed by Roger Daniel for Francis Eaglesfield at the Marygold in Pauls Churchyard 1652." The collation is A—H₂ in eights. The portion of interest to us at present is § 8 which contains a translation of the ode beginning "φαίνεται μοὶ κήνος," for the preservation of which our thanks are due to Longinus. As this is the first effort of its kind it is perhaps worth quoting:

He that sits next to thee now and hears
Thy charming voyce, to me appears

Beauteous as any Deity
That rules the skie.

How did his pleasing glances dart
Sweet languors to my ravish'd heart
At the first sight though so prevailed
That my voyce fail'd.

I'me speechless, feavrish, fires assail
My fainting flesh, my sight doth fail
Whilst to my restless mind my ears
Still hum new fears.

Cold sweats and tremblings so invade
That like a wither'd flower I fade
So that my life being almost lost,
I seem a Ghost.

Yet since I'me wretched must I dare.

The translator then goes on: "Thus did Sappho single out all those accidents that are either inherent or consequential to love and melancholy," etc. Hall's rendering of the text of Longinus is acceptable, but his translation of the Sapphic fragment is stiff and without distinction. His attempt to reproduce the metre of the original, with four syllables instead of five in the last line of each stanza is a failure. This volume contains a long dedication to "My Lord Commissioner Whitelock," and a short address "To the Reader." The dedication is signed "J. Hall." He was also the author of a volume of poems in 1646, and of several other translations, some of which were unpublished at the time of his death at the early age of thirty-one.

When Edward Phillips in 1675 compiled his collection of biographical notes which he called "Theatrum Poetarum," he thought it desirable to add a chapter on ancient poetesses, and among these is Sappho of whom he gives a short notice occupying about one page of his duodecimo volume. She is described as "not inferior in fame to the best lyric poets," but no quotations are

given and there is no description of the surviving fragments. The account is very perfunctory, and the unnecessarily manufactured tradition that there was a second and contemporaneous Sappho to serve as a pack-horse for obloquy is mentioned, and as usual the Leucadian rock is brought in with the customary categorical definiteness. The greatness of the poetess seems to be in no way appreciated, and the influence of Ovid is obvious. Longinus soon had another translator. In 1680 there was published a book described on its title page as follows: "A treatise of the Loftiness or Elegancy of Speech, Written Originally in Greek by Longin and now translated out of French by Mr. J. Pulteney," then a quotation from Cicero and the imprint,—"London Printed by N. T. for John Holford Bookseller in the Pall Mall over against St. Alban's Street, 1680." This volume is duodecimo size and the translation is rather colloquial. For our present purpose Chap. VIII is the most interesting. It is headed: "Of Loftiness drawn from Circumstances" and the text reads as follows: "when Sapho [*sic*] would express the disorders of love, she calls to mind all the accidents which are either inherent or consequential to this Passion, but singles out such chiefly, as declare the excessive violence thereof.

Bless'd is the man, thrice bless'd who sits by thee,
Enjoys thy tongue's soft melting harmony
Sees silent joys sit smiling on thy brow;
The Gods themselves do not such pleasure know:
When thou appears't, streight at my heaving heart
My blood boils up, and runs through every part,
Into such Extasies of Joy, I'm thrown,
My voice forsakes me and I'm speechless grown;
A heavy darkness hovers o'er my eyes
From my pale cheeks, the coward colour flies;
Intranc'd I lie, panting for want of breath
And shake as in an Agony of death.
Yet since I'm wretched, I must dare, etc.

Don't you wonder how she brings together all these

different things, the Soul, Body, Speech, Looks, etc., as if they had been so many distinct persons just expiring?" The translation of the commentary of Longinus then proceeds. It is interesting to compare Pulteney's version of this second important Sapphic fragment, with the work of Hall already described. As it is not improbable that Pulteney knew no Greek, and as his version is filtered through the French, it is not remarkable that in this process the Sapphic metre should have disappeared and that considerable divergencies from the original should have developed. There was a Third Translation of Longinus by an unknown author, published at Oxford in 1695.

The "Athenian Mercury," a curious seventeenth century journal, which ran for a few years from 1691 to 1697 contains in the issue for January 12, 1691, in No. 13, Question 8, an interesting reference to Sappho, but no translation or quotation from her poems. Question 8 is "whether Sappho or Mrs. Behn were the better poetess." The reply to this query is somewhat rambling, but part of it is worth repeating, if only for its amusing qualities.

It is stated "That Sappho writ too little and Mrs. Behn too much, for us to give 'em any just or equal character" and further, "but yet one Fragment consisting of but a few lines which we have of Sappho's carries something in it so soft, *luscious and charming even in the sound of the words*, that Catullus himself who has endeavoured somewhat like 'em in Latin comes infinitely short of 'em, and so have all the rest who have writ their own thoughts on that subject,—for which we cou'd wish that Mrs. Behn herself had translated 'em before she went to Elysium to meet her." The italics are in the original and the writer thus shows, as he apparently means the italics to indicate emphasis, that he had a real appreciation for the melodious qualities of the Hymn to Aphrodite, obviously the poem in his mind, although his seventeenth century imagination did not permit him sufficiently to differentiate between the studied salaciousness of Mrs. Behn

and the ardent but somewhat detached passion expressed by Sappho. This sprightly lady's translation would no doubt have been interesting, but probably not too *convenient*, and we perhaps need not deplore our loss. We see again in the comment of this writer that the reputation of Sappho has suffered owing to the ignorance and lack of a just critical faculty on the part of those too ready to accept the scurrility of a few degenerate Greeks who lived centuries after her time and who were writing *down* to audiences, themselves degenerate.

Sir Thomas Pope Blount published in 1694 his book, "De Re Poetica or Remarks upon Poetry."

After a somewhat cursory and diffuse essay upon poetry and versification with copious quotations from Dryden, Rapin and others, a considerable portion of this quarto volume is then given up to what are called "Characters and Censures." In this portion there is a two-page biography of Sappho, who is described as "an excellent poetess, called the ninth Lyrick and the Tenth Muse and is said to have written Epigrams, Elegies, Iambicks, Monodies and nine books of Lyrick Verses; and was the Inventress of that kind of verse which from her is called Sapphick." There are a few biographical and critical details similar to those in the "Theatrum Poetarum," but no fragments are quoted and no translations are offered or even mentioned. However, the general tone of Blount's remarks is highly laudatory and appreciative. The Leucadian rock legend is not mentioned and the name of Phaon does not occur.

The first reasoned criticism of Sappho and her works in English did not appear until 1711, when in Nos. 223, 229 and 233 of the "Spectator," Joseph Addison gave us a more or less comprehensive view of the subject. He says that "among the mutilated poets of antiquity there is none whose fragments are so beautiful as those of Sappho," and he describes her as "not descending to those little points, conceits and turn of wit with which many of our modern lyrics are so miserably infected."

He repeats the legend connecting her with Phaon, and gives a circumstantial repetition of the Leucadian rock story. In the first-mentioned number of the "Spectator," he introduces a translation by Ambrose Philips, of what he calls the "Ode." Addison professed to believe that this translation had "all the ease and spirit of an original," and altogether praised it much more highly than we should feel inclined to do now. The translation consists of seven six-line verses in rhyming couplets, but the mellifluous cadence of the Sapphic metre is entirely lost in an eighteenth century jingle. The rendering itself is very free, and has suffered by thus diverging from the original. Addison gives also a translation of the ode preserved by Longinus, which has the same general characteristics as the first production, and is also from the pen of Philips. We may share Addison's feeling here expressed that he "cannot but wonder that these two finished pieces have never been attempted before by any of our countrymen," but part of our feeling is also astonishment that he should have been unaware of Hall's and Pulteney's two efforts. At the time when this was written no other fragments of Sappho's writings of any importance were known, but Addison and Philips seem to have stimulated an interest in her poetry for there were soon other attempts with these two important poems, and also with a few other fragments. The Sapphic metre, however, seems to have been beyond the taste or comprehension of these eighteenth-century mediocrities, for so we may call them when we are comparing their efforts with the perfection of the Hymn to Aphrodite, which reaches a height to which they could not rise.

The attitude of the eighteenth century towards Sappho is very well shown by the inclusion, among other translations, of this Hymn in English from the pen of Mr. Herbert in the 1713-1714 edition of the translation of Petronius Arbiter, a writer studied by the few for his historical and literary interest and by a larger number for other reasons. This book, an octavo, contains in

addition to the translation of Petronius "by several hands," versions of the works of Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, Pindar, Anacreon and Sappho. The Sapphic fragments occur on pages 325 and 328. Herbert's version of the hymn is perhaps better than the company in which it is found. It consists of eight four-line stanzas, the Sapphic metre being ignored. Whatever majestic beauty the original derives from this element in the poem is therefore lost, and the translator has allowed his preconceptions to interfere with accuracy in rendering. For example, *δολόπλοκε* becomes "most knowing in the mystery of love," a poor substitute for something more literal, besides containing a meaning entirely absent from the Greek word. Elijah Fenton, in his volume of "Poems on Several Occasions," published in 1717, thought it worth while to include "Sappho to Phaon, a Love-epistle, translated from Ovid," but for some reason perhaps ignorance or lack of appreciation and understanding, he offered nothing of the real Sappho. He added, however, an epistle of "Phaon to Sappho," which he states that he thought suitable. His translation had already appeared in 1712 in a volume of miscellaneous poems, published by Lintott, a volume which also contained the first appearance in print of Pope's "Rape of the Lock."

Two years after their appearance in the "Spectator," the versions by Ambrose Philips were included in a volume of collected translations, described on the title-page as follows: "The works of Anacreon and Sappho done from the Greek by Several Hands, with their Lives prefixed. To which is added the Prize of Wisdom," etc. "Also Bion's Idyllium upon the Death of Adonis, by the Earl of Winchelsea. Printed for E. Curll at the Dial and Bible in Fleet Street and A. Bettesworth at the Red Lion on London Bridge 1713. Price 2s. Where may be had Mr. Creech's Translation of Theocritus. Price 2s. 6d." The book is a small octavo with an emblematic frontispiece. The preface is signed G. S.

the initials of Sewell, and it states, erroneously of course, that Cowley was the first translator of Anacreon. Why Thomas Stanley was thus overlooked it is impossible to say. The portion of this volume devoted to Sappho has a sub-title thus: "Odes of Sappho done from Greek by Mr. A. Philips," and there is a so-called life of Sappho occupying four pages, chiefly devoted to a somewhat fantastic exposition of the Leucadian legend. The translations themselves have already been noticed. It was some years after this before another translation of the poetess appeared in English. In 1735 John Addison published an edition of Anacreon and Sappho, in which at the end there is a section devoted to the works of the poetess. At the beginning of this portion of the volume there is an engraving by Van der Gucht, of a "busto" at Wilton House. As was customary there is first a biographical account in which as much as was known or could be reasonably conjectured about her family and friends is set down, and the Leucadian legend is apparently accepted. The Sapphic portion of the volume extends from page 247 to the end at page 279. The author gives his own version of the immortal hymn, in which he says in twenty-eight lines what Philips said in forty-two, and he also gives translations of the other known fragments. As a translator he is certainly just as successful as Philips, but there is nothing specially distinguished in his work in this connection. He justly rejects the mistaken chronology which made Anacreon a contemporary of Sappho. The Greek text in this edition is placed opposite the English version, and the Greek type is unpleasant on account of the number of ligatures. There are included eight of the shorter fragments, and among them that which most arrests our attention is the following:

Δέδυκε μὲν ἃ σελλάνα
καὶ ἱλῆαδες, μέσαι δὲ
νύκτες, πᾶρα δ' ἔρχετ' ὥρα
ἔγω δὲ μὴ κατεύδω.

Addison's translation of this is comparatively successful, but he requires five lines to convey his meaning. A rendering more nearly literal would be the following:

The silver moon has left the sky,
The Pleiades also have gone;
Midnight comes—and goes. The hours fly
But solitary still I lie.

This John Addison published an edition in English of Petronius in 1736.

"The Works of Anacreon, Sappho, Bion, Moschus and Musaeus. Translated into English by a Gentleman of Cambridge," is the title of the small octavo published in 1760, and containing versions of the Sapphic fragments so far as they were then known. The author was Francis Fawkes, and he precedes his translations with a few biographical and critical notes. The translations themselves do not differ materially, in general from those which had preceded them. In his introduction Fawkes traverses Addison's favourable criticisms of Ambrose Philips, and calls certain of his lines "amazingly rough and awkward." He thinks that Addison's friendship for Philips may have influenced his judgement, and this is probably true. The next edition of the poetess was that in which the introductory poem entitled: "The Classic, a Poem," is signed E. B. G., initials which belong to E. Burnaby Greene. The book is called "The Works of Anacreon and Sappho, with Pieces from Ancient Authors and Occasional Essays," etc. The imprint is "London, Printed for J. Ridley in St. James' Street, 1768." It is a small octavo. The two chief portions of Sappho's works occupy pages 139 to 146 inclusive, and the so-called fragments, pages 165 to 169. The Hymn to Aphrodite occupies forty-two lines, and the translation is very free and decidedly mediocre. As was usual with his predecessors, this translator also ignores the Sapphic metre. The biographical remarks in this edition are stereotyped and uninteresting, and their

uncritical writer, while admitting the genius of the poetess, is inclined to accept the scandals and the absurd Phaon legend. It is curious to note how every writer up to the nineteenth century was ready to accept the Ovidian version of this alleged episode, apparently without stopping to think that Ovid himself might be straining probability in order to indulge in the licence of a poet. In this edition ὤκεις στρουθιοί become "feathered steeds," and we may record the fact that the philological and historical footnotes have a certain amount of interest. Some years before this edition, in 1745, Akenside published his thin quarto volume of Odes. In Ode X he introduces a free paraphrase of the great Sapphic hymn, in which he has made a not unsuccessful use of the material, but that is the most we can say for his effort. The beauty of the original evidently appealed to him, but its rhythm and metre were beyond his powers of conversion into English, or else he had no wish to go beyond a mere paraphrase. During the remainder of the eighteenth century there was not much done in the way of translating or editing Sappho. There were some reprints, for example, Ambrose Philips in 1748 and 1765, and Fawkes in 1789, and in 1799 a charmingly produced little book, called "The Wreath," and edited by Edward Du Bois, appeared. It contained selections from Sappho, Theocritus, Bion and Moschus, with text, notes and literal translations. It is a well printed volume, and the Greek type is very satisfactory.

It was not, however, until the nineteenth century was well under way that attention began to be devoted to the scientific treatment of the literary remains of the poetess. The study of the subject was stimulated later in the century by the discovery of additional fragments of her works, and, still more recently, during the last ten or fifteen years the Egyptian discoveries have tantalized us with several small but important rewards for great effort, and have held out the alluring prospect of further good fortune in this direction. An interesting collection

of translations from the Greek poets is that called "Collections from the Greek Anthology by the Late Rev. Robert Bland and Others." Of this there appeared in 1833 what was described as a new edition by J. H. Merivale, and for our present purpose the interest lies in the small section devoted to Sappho, in fact barely ten pages including the biographical and critical notice, which is very short. The Hymn and the Ode are turned into English Sapphics, and the other known fragments are likewise suitably translated, in nearly every case by Merivale, who was responsible for the rendering of the two important poems. The version of these is an improvement upon all that had gone before, though it is perhaps more the work of a scholar than of a poet, and in any case it makes evident the inherent and essential difficulty of filtering through the mind of the scholar the perfervid imagery and clean-cut, mellifluous diction of the poetess, without losing some of the beauty of the original.

In 1838 appeared the two-volume Pickering edition of Merivale's "Poems Original and Translated" in which the translations of Sappho are repeated. There were several other translations during the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, such as those of Elton in 1814, Egerton in 1815, and later, Palgrave in 1854 and Walhouse in 1877, but these do not call for special comment. They show, however, that interest in the poetess was becoming more general in spite of the fact that for some years the stimulation of new discoveries was wanting.

In 1869, Edwin Arnold published his "Poets of Greece," a book covering much ground in comparatively small space. The portion devoted to Sappho extends from page 118, and she is called that "exquisite poetess . . . whose genius among all feminine votaries of singing stands incontestably highest," and is referred to as "the purest impersonation of the art of lyric song." Swinburne is rightly taken to task for repeating "the untrue and unnatural scandal against her sweet name which gossiping generations have invented," though

credit is given to him for doing "brilliant justice to her deathless genius." Arnold rejects the Leucadian rock legend as well as the alleged Phaon episode. His translation of the immortal hymn into English Sapphic metre is easily the best up to the time of its appearance, and is only rivalled by that of J. A. Symonds, first printed in Wharton's edition of the poetess. The rhythm and the majestic lyrical qualities of the original are preserved in this rendering, but naturally something must be lost by the transfer of such a masterpiece from its original into *any* language. Arnold also gives translations of nine other fragments, and adds a number of illuminating comments. J. A. Symonds' own work, "Studies of the Greek Poets" which passed through several editions is almost entirely historical and critical, not being much concerned with translations into English. Arnold was happily able to shake himself entirely free from the effect of the scandals which he so justly condemns, but, as we have seen, the earlier writers, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were too easily led astray in this particular. Donne's works afford an example of how difficult or perhaps impossible it was for even great writers to escape the effects of such scandalous traditions. They were far too ready to accept these stories, and to use them in connection with Sappho as a peg on which to hang some gaudy product of their licentious imaginations. Donne's poem, published in 1633 and entitled "Sapho to Philaenis" is an instance. It is as impossible to deny to Donne the possession of poetic instinct, as it is to assume that he had any particular tendency to exploit the indecent, so we must explain such poems as this by his ignorance of Greek and of all that concerned Sappho, except the unpleasant tradition which her name connoted at the time when he wrote. Some modern writers have also been guilty of the same sort of thing.

An important article on Sappho appeared in the "Atlantic Monthly" for July 1871, by T. W. Higginson.

It occupies ten pages, and in it the writer gives as much general information of a biographical and critical nature as was available at the time. He repudiates the calumnies of the comic writers of later centuries, such as Ameipsias, Amphis, Antiphanes, Diphilus, Ephippus and Timocles, who by the way are known only by very scanty references, and he traces the Phaon legend to its Ovidian source. He mentions Welcker's important essay published in 1816, "Sappho von einem herrschenden Vorurtheil befreit," this being a successful effort to clear away the obloquy for which willing credulity and a certain foul-mindedness among these comic writers had supplied the foundations upon which a later superstructure of scandal rested. Higginson's estimate of Sappho's genius was one of enthusiastic appreciation, and he subjects Mure, the sour Scot, to a number of hard, but not too hard, knocks for his narrow-minded and unreasoning support of these comic writers. He offers versions in English of practically all the fragments known up to the time when he wrote, the Hymn, as might be expected, being the most ambitious effort, and of this he says, "it is safe to say that there is not a lyrical poem in Greek literature nor in any other which has by its artistic structure inspired more enthusiasm than this." He devotes a page to the legend of the Leucadian rock and treats it, as far as Sappho is concerned, as of little account and insubstantial. He also discusses the question whether such a poem as the Hymn to Aphrodite is in any way autobiographical. There should not, however, be any difficulty in arriving at a conclusion in this respect. The poem may be autobiographical, but is probably not so in the ordinary sense. It represents perhaps the autobiography of a poetic mood, a mood evanescent and transitory which no more represents autobiography in the ordinary sense than do Hamlet's introspective musings or the malign meditations of Iago.

In 1885, H. T. Wharton published his "Sappho," a choice example of bookmaking, a careful general biblio-

graphy of the subject in all languages, and an appreciation of the poetess and her writings which at once strongly appealed to the book-lover, the classical scholar and the ordinary reader of good books. This edition, a small octavo, is unexceptionable in appearance and construction, and the Greek type used for the original text is dignified, and agreeable to read. The frontispiece, however, is distinctly the product of Mid-Victorian imagination in conception and execution, and while it has a certain interest as an ornament it has no value from the historical point of view. There is a bust of the Græco-Roman period in the Galleria Geographica in the Vatican which appeals much more strongly to the imagination and is the most pleasing of all the reputed likenesses of the poetess. A photographic reproduction of this bust is used as a frontispiece in "Sappho and the Island of Lesbos" by Mary M. Patrick (1912). Wharton's book contains the first appearance of J. A. Symonds' splendid rendering of the Hymn which shares with Arnold's the merit of being the best reproduction in our language of the cadence and rhythm of the original. It contains twenty-eight lines as in the original, and the Sapphic metre is successfully reproduced. This edition is a very complete compilation of text and translations, combined with biography and criticism. It was reprinted in 1887, 1895 and 1898, each time with some additions. Such is a highly satisfactory record for a book of this sort appealing as it does to a limited circle of readers. Before the appearance of Wharton's book, Swinburne had put on record what he thought about Sappho. In "Notes on Poems and Reviews," referring to his "Anactoria" he says, "the keynote which I have here touched was struck long since by Sappho" and he expresses regret at his feeling of inability to render into English what he describes as "the supreme success, the final achievement of poetic art." We could wish that he had not been so sensitive to the difficulties of turning into English the melodious cadences and the passionate rhythm of the

Hymn to Aphrodite and the Ode, when he was composing his vibrant panegyric of the immortal poetess, so that we might now have, in addition to a few fine translations, one from the pen of him in whom shone more brilliantly than in almost any other modern the incandescence of Greek poetic genius. We cannot doubt that that effort would have been crowned with a great measure of success, though in one or two references to Sappho, Swinburne is inclined to extravagance, and Arnold's criticism of him, already referred to, is justified.

✓ In March 1894 the "Atlantic Monthly" was again the vehicle for an interesting and able article of seven pages, entitled "The Sapphic Secret," written by Maurice Thompson. This writer incidentally translates many of the shorter fragments usually literally, but does not attempt the two long lyrics. He emphasizes "the amazing power of Greek words as words," and says that this is shown "in such a way that phrases like ripe fruit clusters seem bursting with a rich juice of passionate meaning." He notes also the marvellous "verbal economy" of Sappho, and the comprehensiveness and power of such a word as *ιμερόφωνος*. Critical appreciation, not translation, is the purpose of this article. While on the subject of Sappho's choice of words it is impossible to overlook one fragment:

Ἀμφὶ δὲ ψύχρον κελάδει δι' ὕδων
μαλινῶν αἰθυσσομένων δὲ φύλλων
κῶμα καταρρεῖ.

The sound of the words, the repetition of long vowels particularly Ω, the poetic imagery of the whole and the drowsy cadence of the last two words give this fragment a combination of qualities probably not surpassed in any language. To put it into English is difficult, additionally so as it is only a fragment with which we are dealing, but a fairly close translation containing the idea of the original is as follows:

And all around, the cool breeze murmurs, rustling
Through apple branches, while from quivering leaves,
Streams down deep slumber.

Kṓma is something more than ordinary sleep; it is deeper with a quality of oblivion in it, and so differs from *ὕπνος*, the more ordinary term. Poe in the "Haunted Palace" approaches this, when he writes:

Banners—yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow.
(This, all this was in the olden
Time long ago).

But here there is just a suggestion of effort which is absent from the work of Sappho.

In 1903 J. R. Tutin published at Cottingham, near Hull, a small pamphlet in gray wrappers, which contained various selected translations of most of the Sapphic fragments, but without commentary and without Greek text. There is a short prefatory note explaining the reasons for the issue of the compilation.

One of the most recent and comprehensive discourses on the subject of Sappho is a lecture by Professor Tucker, of Melbourne, delivered in 1913 before the Classical Association of Victoria, and published in 1914. It is an appreciative and discriminating thesis, and among its other good points it gives short shrift to the Leucadian rock story and to the scandals of the Greek comic writers and their Roman plagiarists in this connection. Not much attention is given to English translations, except in using them to illustrate comparative poetical construction and form. This practically exhausts the list of works in English upon Sappho and her poetry and its particular metre. Everything she wrote was of course not in the metre with which her name is associated. She used Alcaic, Choriambic and others occasionally, but as we have seen, the important fragments are in her own Sapphic. The soft Aeolic variety of Greek was a fitting medium for the rich and sensuous language and imagery of her poems, and the result is perhaps more pleasing than would have been the case, had the circumstances of time and place caused her to use the

crystalline and more finely chiselled Attic of two centuries later. Some writers, especially the earlier ones, emphasize the disadvantages of English as a language into which to translate Greek poetry, the inference being that English *as a language* is unsuitable. It is not really that English is an unsuitable or inferior language for the expression of poetic conceptions, but that it is *different*, and that the transfer of perfection in one language into perfection in another is not within the bounds of possibility. Approximation is all that even genius can hope for in the attempt. An important point to remember in considering the construction and metre of the Sapphic poems is that we may take it for certain that they were always delivered in the form of a recitative or chant, and that they were nearly always accompanied by music on one or more of the stringed instruments for which Lesbos was famous at the time when Sappho lived. The early translators do not seem to have taken this into consideration, but have merely caught at the idea of the original and put it into the sort of rhyme with which they happened to be most familiar. The translation of *στρούθοι* by "sparrows" does not seem a very happy one in spite of its use by Symonds and some others. It is true that *στρούθος* means a sparrow or a small bird, but in English the word sparrow calls up a vision of the dingy and quarrelsome chatterer of the London squares, and such is certainly not the most poetically appropriate locomotive power for the brilliant car of the foam-born goddess in her flight "*ἀέθρος διὰ μέσσω*." Even others of the sparrow tribe lack dignity, though there may have been a Lesbian bird which seemed suitable to Sappho. According to Liddell and Scott the word is used generally for a bird, and by Aeschylus even to mean an eagle; though usually a small bird is understood.

Part X, 1914, of the Egypt Exploration Funds publication, the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* contains the latest important Sapphic discovery, apparently an almost complete poem of twenty-four lines which are nearly

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perfect. The poem has been cleverly emended by Mr. J. M. Edmonds of Cambridge, and it was published with a literal translation in the "Times," 4 May 1914. Such discoveries keep alive in us the hope that the future may be still kinder to us and that some day the Egyptian sands will give up a considerable proportion of the nine books of lyrics. An interesting point in connection with this most recent discovery is that Wharton, quoting from Apollonius, in the fragment which he numbers 13, gives it as:

- - - - - Ἔγω δὲ κήν' ὄτ-
τω τις ἔραται.

We are now able to expand this fragment into nearly the whole of a poem, for this is the ending of the first stanza of this latest addition to what remains to us of the efflorescence of Sappho's poetic genius.



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